

Recommendations to Speakers

In today's international business environment, interpretation is becoming increasingly common as a means of helping people from different countries to communicate. In order to get your message across to an international audience, it is essential to understand how best to work with interpreters.

There are three types of interpreting:

- Simultaneous
- Consecutive
- Whispering

Simultaneous is the most common form for conferences and business meetings. A microphone relays the speaker's voice to the interpreters who are sitting in soundproof booths. They then interpret instantaneously into the relevant language and the delegates listen to the interpretation via headsets.

Consecutive is used when simultaneous interpretation would not be practical, eg for factory visits or over dinner. The interpreter stands or sits next to you and interprets what you have said after you have said it, sometimes taking notes.

Whispering is the least common form of interpretation. The interpreter sits next to the delegates and whispers the translation of the presentation while it is being made.

Making a Presentation to an International Audience

If you know that your presentation is being interpreted into other languages, bear in mind the following points:

- Adapt the content of your speech to reflect the fact that it will be listened to by people from different cultures. Jokes rarely translate well and may even seem inappropriate to people from certain cultures. Culture-specific references are also usually meaningless to delegates from other countries. Colloquial or very technical language can be hard to translate, so stick to everyday vocabulary wherever possible.
- If you have written your speech out in advance, always provide a copy for the interpreters. Ideally, they should receive it a couple of weeks before the presentation, but if this is impossible, at least distribute it to them just before you speak, along with copies of any transparencies or other documents you may be discussing. Background information on the subject of the presentation is also useful if provided in advance of the conference.
- When using simultaneous interpretation, you will be speaking into a microphone. The sound from the microphone is what the interpreters hear, and if they cannot hear what you are saying, they cannot interpret it. First, make sure your microphone is switched on and the interpreters can hear you. Direct your voice towards the microphone, but slightly over the top of it rather than straight at it. Remain at a constant distance from the microphone – if you keep moving towards it and then away, the volume will keep going up and down. When turning to point to a screen behind you, remember that if you speak with your back to the microphone, it will not pick up what you say. To avoid this problem, people using transparencies often wear a small microphone attached to their tie or lapel. If you are using one of these, remember that if you brush against it with your hand or jacket while speaking, the interpreters will only be able to hear a loud crackling noise.
- When using an overhead projector, make sure the screen is positioned so that the interpreters can see it. It is important to take the audience through the content of each transparency, otherwise only those people who speak the language in which they are written will understand them.
- The most common mistake made by people speaking to an international audience is to speak too quickly. Interpreters don't simply repeat what you say, they have to translate it first, so they inevitably need more time than you do. Consider also that many European languages (including French) are up to one third longer than English. Furthermore, there may be delegates listening to your speech in the

language you are making it in, even though it is their second language.

- One way to ensure you keep to a reasonable pace is to pause at the end of every sentence. This allows the listeners time to digest what you have said and gives the interpreters time to finish translating. A good speaker will wait until he or she hears that the interpreters have stopped speaking before continuing with his or her presentation.
- It is essential to speak clearly. Interpreters can only translate what they hear; if you mumble they will not be able to communicate your message.

If you bear all these points in mind next time you attend a multilingual conference or business meeting, you will be doing your bit to improve international communication and understanding.

Do's and don't when working with an interpreter



Do:

- Provide a copy of your speech, transparencies and reference material in advance.
- Switch your microphone on and use it correctly.
- Speak slowly and clearly.



Don't:

- Use too many jokes or culture-specific references.
- Turn away from the microphone when speaking about transparencies.
- Change language in the middle of a sentence.